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CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

[15 April 1998]

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I. GEOGRAPHICAL, DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC INFORMATION

A. The land

1. The Central African Republic is located in the heart of the African continent. It has an area of 623,000 km^2 and is bounded to the north by Chad, to the east by the Sudan, to the west by Cameroon and to the south by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of the Congo-Brazzaville. The climate is sub-Saharan in the north and equatorial in the south. There are two seasons: the dry season and the wet season. The country is well watered, but, during the dry season, there is a lack of rainfall in the savannah. Timberland is extensive and there are many subsoil deposits.

2. Administratively, the Central African Republic is divided into prefectures, sub-prefectures, administrative control posts and communes. In the context of decentralization and regionalization, however, the Constitution of 14 January 1995 provides for its division into seven regions (art. 99).

B. The people

1. Population

3. According to the 1988 general population census, the population was estimated at 2,688,428 in December 1988, an average density of 4.3 inhabitants per km^2. By 1995, it should have reached 3 million. It is unevenly distributed throughout the territory. The east, which is sparsely populated, is inhabited by 20 per cent of the population for an area of 53 per cent of the national territory, while the west has 80 per cent of the total population. The majority of the population (1,706,307 inhabitants in 1988, i.e. 63.5 per cent) is rural, as against 36.6 per cent (982,110 inhabitants) in urban areas.

4. An analysis of the 1988 census data shows that the Central African population is young: persons aged under 15 years account for 43.3 per cent of the total population, those aged between 15 and 59, for 51.7 per cent and those over 60, for 5 per cent.

5. The 1988 census gave a figure of 59,314 heads of household, 81.2 per cent of whom are men and 18.8 per cent, women, with 32.8 per cent living in urban areas and 67.2 per cent in rural areas. One woman in six is a head of household in rural areas, as compared to one in four in urban areas.

2. Vital statistics

6. Fertility: Between 1975 and 1988, the crude birth rate dropped from 44 ‰ to 41.6 ‰. Fertility is still high in the Central African Republic because the average number of children per woman rose from 5.9 in 1975 to 6.1 in 1988. Fertility is both early and late. The last census shows that 72 per cent of women give birth by the age of 30. It should also be noted that sterility is a matter of concern in the country. In 1988, it was estimated that 26 per cent of women aged 50 were sterile.

7. Mortality: The level of general mortality has continued to drop in recent years: the crude mortality rate went from 19 deaths per 1,000 inhabitants to 16.7 deaths per 1,000 inhabitants. The highest mortality rates are between 0 and 5 years and after 70 years. The result of the decline in the mortality rate is an increase in life expectancy. There has thus been an annual increase of 0.45 years. Life expectancy has increased according to sex: that of men went from 41 to 47.2 years between 1975 and 1988 and that of women, from 45 to 50.6 years.

3. Ethnic diversity

8. Central African ethnic groups show clear-cut diversity, depending on the environment. However, there are common cultural traits, such as Sango, the national language spoken by everyone.

9. The main ethnic groups are:

(a) The Gbaya group in the west;

(b) The Banda group in the centre-west;

(c) The Bantu group in the south-west, which is composed of the Mbimou, Ngbaka-Mandja, Pandé, Bangando, Mbati and Pygmy sub-groups, all living in the forest region;

(d) The Ubangians, from the savannah and the Nile, include the Ngbaka, Monzombo, Gbanziri and Bouraka sub-groups;

(e) The Ngbandi group is composed of the Sango and Yakoma sub-groups; they are found along the Ubangi River;

(f) The Nzakara-Zandé are located in the east; and

(g) The Sara and Mboum group is in the north.

4. Level of instruction

10. The proportion of illiterate persons is still high: in 1988, 1,478,460 persons did not know how to read and write (63 per cent as against 77 per cent in 1975). There are more illiterate women (76 per cent) than illiterate men (49.1 per cent). The same survey shows that 30 per cent of persons aged 10 and over have completed primary education and only 11 per cent have completed a higher level. Of 358,564 persons who said that they attended school in 1988, there were 221,802 boys and 137,762 girls, a ratio of 161 per cent. This high percentage shows how few girls have access to schooling.

C. The economy

11. The Central African economic situation is a matter of concern. In recent years, it has been characterized by an ongoing socio-political crisis which has torn much of the industrial and commercial fabric and generally

slowed down economic activity. The growth rate of gross domestic product (GDP) in real terms dropped from 2.9 per cent in 1995 to -2 per cent in 1996, a 4.9 per cent difference.

12. The Central African economy is basically agricultural, with the primary sector (agriculture and mining industries) accounting for about 40 per cent of GDP. The main agricultural export crops are coffee, cotton and tobacco. The agricultural subsistence crops are maize, groundnuts, millet, sorghum, sesame and manioc. Animal husbandry and fisheries make a substantial contribution to economic activity. Forestry declined from 1995 to 1996: logging output decreased by 11.7 per cent, from 325,895 m^3 to 278,810 m^3. Mining activity also slowed down in 1995-1996.

II. GENERAL POLITICAL STRUCTURE

A. Political history

13. The Central African Republic acceded to international sovereignty on 13 August 1960 after having been the territory of Ubangi-Shari in the French Overseas Colonial Empire from 27 October 1946 until 1 December 1958. The country's real political development began in 1946 with the promulgation of the fourth French Constitution, which established an assembly allowing deputies elected in the French Overseas Territories to be members of the second chamber of the French Parliament.

14. However, the turning point in the development of the country's political and administrative structures came in 1956, when the Deferre Act granted the Overseas Territories administrative autonomy. This Act gave Ubangi-Shari a territorial assembly following a hotly contested and competitive election between various political groups in 1957. After these elections, the Movement for Social Development in Black Africa (MESAN), the party of the Deputy Mayor of Bangui, Barthélémy Boganda, won all the seats and thus became the ultra-dominant party. Father Boganda, the founder of MESAN, had a very great impact on Ubangian political life from 1946 until 1959, the year of his death.

15. On 16 February 1959, he gave the Central African Republic its first Constitution, which was adopted by the Legislative Assembly. Its promulgation by the President of the Republic officially made the Central African Republic part of the French Community, a kind of very loose federal structure that gave France broad powers in matters forming part of State sovereignty, such as currency, foreign affairs, the army, justice and energy resources. The 1959 Constitution was, however, broadly based on the French Constitution of 4 October 1958 and the regime of the Federal Republic of Germany in that it set up a rationalized parliamentary regime, under which the Parliament is unicameral and the executive, legislative and judicial powers are completely separate, although the President of the Republic is pre-eminent in relations with the Parliament and the Government.

16. Unfortunately, President Boganda's death on 29 March 1959 prevented the newly established institutions from taking shape and becoming consolidated. His successor, President David Dacko, was forced by circumstances as soon as he took power to amend important provisions of the Constitution which

irremediably changed the nature of the parliamentary regime. A new constitutional system was thus established between 1960 and 1964; MESAN became the single party and power was concentrated in the hands of one man at the expense of a power-sharing regime.

17. As a result, a second Constitution was adopted by the National Assembly on 16 November 1964. MESAN, the single party, proposed a single list of candidates for the presidential and legislative elections. The 1964 political regime was a presidential regime under which the censure motion and the right of the President of the Republic to dissolve parliament were revoked. The ministers had no autonomous powers and were entirely accountable to the Head of State, who appointed and dismissed them.

18. The regime lasted only one year because, on 31 December 1965, President David Dacko was overthrown in a coup d'état led by Colonel Jean-Bédel Bokassa, who would govern the country by the constitutional acts he published the day after he took power until 4 December 1976, when the Imperial Constitution was promulgated.

19. The third Constitution provided for a constitutional monarchy and gave the Emperor exorbitant powers which exist in presidential political regimes. It provided for the establishment of a unicameral parliament with residual powers, a constitutional court and a government led by a prime minister. It must be made clear that the Parliament and the Constitutional Court were never set up under the Empire. Moreover, the Constitution of the Empire proclaimed MESAN the single party and vested in it the power to oversee the work of the Government, adopt general policy lines and give the Emperor advisory opinions on any matters he might submit to it. The coup d'état of 21 September 1979 that President David Dacko carried out by means of Operation Barracuda put an end to the one-man rule of Emperor Bokassa I.

20. On 5 February 1981, David Dacko promulgated the fourth Constitution following the National Constitutional Seminar. The March 1981 presidential election was won by the Central African Democratic Union (UDC), the party of David Dacko, who was thus elected President of the Republic. The bodies provided for in the Constitution would, however, not be established because, on 1 September 1981, the army took power again.

21. The leader of the armed forces, General André Kolingba, immediately suspended the Constitution, prohibited political party activity and governed by means of the Military Committee for National Recovery (CMRN). On 26 November 1986, he had a new Constitution adopted by referendum, thereby establishing a stronger presidential regime, institutionalizing the Rassemblement Democratique Centrafricain (RDC), the single party, and setting up a bicameral parliament (National Assembly, lower house; Economic and Regional Council, upper house). These institutions operated normally, even beyond their regulation term of office, as provided for by the Constitution, but, as a result of the democracy movements of the 1990s, the 1986 Constitution was amended successively by Acts Nos. 91.001, 91.003 and 91.013 of 8 March 1991, 4 July 1991 and 28 August 1992. These constitutional amendments established a multiparty system and a parliamentary regime and, ultimately, liberalized political life.

22. From October 1992 until September 1993, the Central African Republic went through a lengthy transition period, since the elections of 25 October 1992 were cancelled by President Kolingba, who found that they involved too many irregularities. During this transition period, the term of office of the President of the Republic was extended on the basis of an agreement by the leaders of the main recognized political parties. The National Provisional Political Council of the Republic (CNPPR) was thus set up as a body composed of wise men who were potential candidates for the office of President of the Republic; it had only an advisory role and no decision-making power.

23. In order to complete this peaceful transition to a legitimate political regime, a joint electoral commission was set up to conduct a voter census and monitor electoral operations. It was composed of representatives of the party in power and of the opposition political parties. It was equipped with adequate human, financial and material resources to ensure the success of the August and September 1993 elections, which brought to power the candidate of the Central African People's Liberation Movement (MLPC), President Ange-Félix Patassé, the present Head of State of the Central African Republic.

24. In his political programme, Mr. Patassé promised the people a new Constitution, which he had adopted by referendum on 28 December 1994 and promulgated on 14 January 1995. According to Central African constitutional experts, this Constitution is a synthesis of the 1959 and 1981 Constitutions. Its main innovations are the following:

(a) The restriction of the length of the presidential term of office;

(b) The establishment of a genuine parliamentary regime with a unicameral parliament;

(c) A constitutional court set up to monitor the constitutionality of the laws, power-sharing by the authorities and the protection of the freedoms of citizens;

(d) A judiciary composed of two types of courts: ordinary and administrative courts;

(e) The establishment of regions.

B. Organization of powers

25. According to article 17 of the Constitution, the State takes the form of a republic. The Central African State is a sovereign, indivisible and secular State which is subject to the rule of law and in which the separation of powers is quite clear cut, as will be seen below.

1. The executive

26. The executive has two arms and is composed of the President of the Republic and the Government led by a Prime Minister.

27. The President of the Republic, who is elected by direct universal suffrage for a six-year period, renewable once, embodies national unity and guarantees the continuity of the State. The powers vested in him by the Constitution are broad and numerous. In particular:

(a) He appoints the Prime Minister and terminates his functions;

(b) He appoints the other members of the Government on the proposal of the Prime Minister and terminates their functions under the same conditions;

(c) He is the head of the executive power and, as such, presides over the Council of Ministers, promulgates laws and ordinances and signs decrees;

(d) He is the supreme commander of the army and, as such, presides over the National Defence Council;

(e) He is the President of the Supreme Council of the Judiciary;

(f) He negotiates and ratifies international treaties and agreements and issues accreditations to ambassadors and envoys;

(g) He exercises the right of pardon;

(h) He exercises emergency powers in the event of a serious crisis affecting the life of the country or the institutions of the State (art. 26 of the Constitution).

28. The Prime Minister, who is the head of the Government, is chosen by the President of the Republic from among influential persons belonging to the majority party in the Parliament. He is responsible for implementing the policy adopted by the President of the Republic (art. 37). In political and administrative terms, he conducts and coordinates government action. The administration is at his disposal and he appoints civil servants on the orders of the Head of State.

29. He presides over the cabinet and inter-ministerial committees on the basis of an agenda approved by the Head of State (art. 37 *in fine* of the Constitution). He is also responsible both to the Head of State and to the National Assembly. In the exercise of his functions, he may delegate some of his powers to the Ministers (art. 40 of the Constitution).

30. Articles 41, 42 and 43 of the Constitution define the powers of the members of the Government. Some of the powers vested in the Government by the Constitution relate specifically to the consideration by the Government, sitting as the Council of Ministers, of the following matters:

(a) The general policy of the Republic;

(b) The draft plan;

(c) Draft amendments to the Constitution;

(d) Appointments to certain civil and military posts.

The members of the Government thus have to appear before Parliament, during a special session of the Assembly, to answer the oral and written questions asked by the deputies in the areas within their competence.

2. Parliament

31. Parliament, which has a single chamber, has the powers traditionally recognized in a parliamentary regime. The deputies are elected by direct suffrage for a five-year period. The members of the National Assembly elect their President, who has the same term of office as the legislature. The deputies are protected in the exercise of their functions and, when the Assembly is not in session, by the parliamentary immunities provided for in article 49 of the Constitution.

32. The powers of the National Assembly are those of a traditional parliamentary regime. They may be divided into four main categories:

(a) The adoption of laws;

(b) Monitoring government action by means of a vote of confidence and a censure motion;

(c) Written and oral questions and commissions of inquiry;

(d) Authorizing the Government to declare war.

33. The scope of the law is very broad, but article 58 of the Constitution sets its limits. In addition, the ratification or denunciation of international agreements and treaties by the President of the Republic is possible only with the authorization of the National Assembly (art. 66 of the Constitution).

3. The judiciary

34. Prior to the 1995 Constitution, judicial power was exercised by the Supreme Court, which consisted of a constitutional chamber, an administrative chamber, a judicial chamber and a financial chamber.

35. At present, however, the Supreme Court has been divided up differently and, as in France, there are two types of courts:

(a) Ordinary courts (Court of Cassation, Court of Appeal, courts of major jurisdiction and labour courts); and

(b) Administrative courts (Council of State, Court of Conflicts and Court of Audit).

There are also special courts, namely, the High Court of Justice and the Permanent Military Court.

4. Other bodies provided for by the Constitution

36. Title IX, article 97, of the Constitution provides for the establishment of the Economic and Social Council, which plays an advisory role because it must be consulted by the Government on any economic, social or cultural plan or draft programme of action. Its opinion is also requested on any proposal and any bill, ordinance, decree or other necessary measure to promote the Central African Republic's economic, social and cultural development. It is composed of representatives of the country's socio-occupational sectors. Article 15 of the Constitution of 14 January 1995 also provides for the establishment of an independent body, known as the National Broadcasting Commission, which monitors freedom of expression in the Central African Republic.

III. LEGAL FRAMEWORK WITHIN WHICH HUMAN RIGHTS ARE PROTECTED

37. With regard to the judicial, administrative and other authorities with jurisdiction affecting human rights, article 1 of the Constitution of 14 January 1995 provides that: "Human beings are sacred. All public officials have an absolute obligation to respect and protect them". This provision assigns such jurisdiction to "all public officials" absolutely and without exception.

38. In addition to public officials, there are several non-governmental organizations and other bodies with jurisdiction affecting human rights:

(a) The Association of Central African Women Jurists (AFJC), whose main responsibility is to find appropriate solutions to the legal problems of Central African women, in particular, and of African women, in general;

(b) The Central African Human Rights League (LCDH), whose objectives are the promotion and protection of fundamental human rights and individual and collective freedoms;

(c) The Episcopal Justice and Peace Commission of the Catholic Church, whose main responsibility is to reduce social injustice and insecurity;

(d) Action of Christians for the Abolition of Torture and the Death Penalty (ACAT), whose objective is to create awareness of the scandal of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, as well as capital punishment, without discrimination as to political regime;

(e) The Central African Bar Association, whose responsibility is to monitor the ethics of the legal profession;

(f) The National Office of the Association of African Jurists in Bangui, whose basic responsibility is to create a broad current of opinion in favour of the promotion and protection of human rights and individual and collective freedoms as a prerequisite for the self-managed and integral development of African peoples.

39. There are two other institutions:

(a) The National Human Rights Commission (CNDH), a national institution established by Act No. 91.009 of 25 September 1991, whose main responsibility is to monitor respect for fundamental human rights throughout the national territory (see paras. 49, 53, 55 and 56 below);

(b) The National Commission to Follow Up the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which monitors the implementation of the provisions of the Convention and prepares reports on the situation of children for the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva (see paras. 49 and 54 below).

A. Organization of the judiciary

40. Before considering the sensitive issue of the remedies available to an individual who claims that any of his rights have been violated and the systems of compensation and rehabilitation for victims, the organization of the judiciary will be described in order to show how remedies may be exhausted. The organization of the Central African judiciary is the result of Act No. 65/75 of 23 December 1965. The hierarchy is as follows:

(a) Courts of minor or police jurisdiction;

(b) Courts of major jurisdiction;

(c) The Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court.

That Act was repealed by Act No. 95.010 of 22 December 1995.

41. Justice is thus done throughout Central African territory by the Court of Cassation, the Council of State, the Court of Audit, the administrative court and the ordinary courts. One of the major innovations introduced by the 1995 Act is that the single Court of Appeal and the Court of Cassation have specialized divisions. In the Court of Appeal, there is a civil and commercial division, a correctional division and a social division. The Court of Cassation has a civil and commercial division, a criminal division and a social division.

42. In addition to the ordinary courts, there are the following special courts:

(a) The Labour Court;

(b) The Permanent Military Court, which is governed by Order No. 85/015 of 19 April 1985 and whose decisions may be appealed to the Court of Cassation;

(c) The High Court of Justice, which is governed by Order No. 87.052 of 28 November 1987, was amended by another order in 1996. It has jurisdiction to try the Head of State only in the event of treason and ministers and deputies on the basis of an implementation decision taken by a two-thirds majority of the National Assembly. The decisions of this court cannot be appealed. It should be noted that lawyers have full access to courts of all kinds.

43. Administrative appeals are made to the Council of State (arts. 24, 25 et seq. of Act No. 95.012 of 23 December 1995). It should be pointed out that administrative courts have been re-established. In criminal, civil, commercial and social cases, appeals are filed with the Court of Cassation. In criminal cases, special provisions relating to remedies are contained in Act No. 61/265 establishing the Central African Code of Criminal Procedure and Act No. 95.011 on the organization and operation of the Court of Cassation. In social cases, special provisions and remedies are contained in chapter III, articles 86 et seq., of that Act. In civil cases, provisions relating to remedies are contained in Act No. 91.016 of 27 December 1991 (title 14, arts. 491 et seq., of the Code of Civil Procedure).

B. Systems of compensation and rehabilitation for victims

1. Compensation

44. In the Central African Republic, the compensation procedure is not provided for as in France, where the Court of Cassation is empowered to conduct the proceedings. The persons concerned usually use the arbitrary arrest procedure to obtain compensation for any loss or injury they have suffered.

2. Rehabilitation

45. The defendant may have his rights restored and that is reflected in the fact that rehabilitation quashes the conviction and any resulting future disqualification (art. 289 of the Central African Code of Criminal Procedure).

46. The rights provided for in the various human rights instruments are protected by the Constitution of the Central African Republic. The other laws and regulations in force do not derogate from these international instruments. The Central African Republic has signed and ratified most international instruments, but the problem of their incorporation is still a matter of approach. These important documents are separate from national law. The fact that they cannot be invoked in the courts causes a reaction on the part of some judges, who strictly apply the two universally recognized principles of "no offence without a law" (nullum crimen sine lege) and "no penalty without a law" (nulla poena sine lege).

47. This problem has not been solved, however, since opinions are still divided. Some persons think that, when human rights instruments are signed and ratified, they are de facto applicable, while, in the opinion of others, these instruments must be incorporated into internal law in accordance with the principle of integration by reference in order to be applicable, even though they have been signed and ratified. These persons consider that international instruments have to be adapted and brought into line with our laws and regulations before they can be implemented.

48. In view of this duality, the Constitution of 14 January 1995 decided that "As soon as they are published, properly ratified or approved treaties and agreements shall take preference over national laws". The administrative and judicial authorities therefore have to apply them and individuals can invoke or refer to them directly in the courts.

49. There are national bodies responsible for monitoring respect for human rights, namely, the National Human Rights Commission and the National Commission to Follow Up the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but they are not in operation; this is the case of the National Human Rights Commission, in particular, the decree for which has been published, but is so far inoperative.

IV. INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY

50. This section is supposed to indicate whether any special efforts have been made to promote awareness among the public and the relevant authorities of the rights contained in the various United Nations human rights instruments.

A. Dissemination of texts

51. National and international legal texts are disseminated primarily by the national media: radio, television and press. From independence until the present, radio has been the main means, since the other media, which are few in number and not very effective, do not reach the population as a whole. Surveys of the various social sectors in urban areas show that the few Central Africans who possess human rights instruments do not know what they contain, whereas the majority is totally unaware of these documents. Some members of non-governmental human rights organizations even said that they joined only so that they could be defended by their peers if their rights were violated.

B. Translation of texts into the national language

52. Sango is the national language that is spoken throughout the national territory. Since independence, efforts have been made to have some documents translated into Sango, but, so far, no human rights text has been translated into this language. The same is true of nearly all legal texts in the country, which continue to be drafted in French. The problem of the translation of texts into Sango is a serious handicap for the Central African Republic and one to which the authorities have not yet found a solution. There are translation plans, but they are still at the project stage.

C. Government agencies with responsibility for preparing reports

53. It is difficult to know whether government agencies were set up to prepare reports after independence and whether such agencies have received information and other data from outside sources. It was therefore necessary to wait until 1991 for the Government to be forced by events to establish the National Human Rights Commission (Act No. 91.009 of 25 September 1991). Until recently, it was the only government agency authorized to prepare reports. Although it was, at the time, part of the Office of the President of the Republic, the National Human Rights Commission faced a number of problems, particularly financial and political problems, and was unable to operate normally. In view of the obstacles to the smooth functioning of this government agency, it is hard to say whether it has received information and other data from outside sources.

54. Following the Central African Republic's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992 and as a result of the need to establish national follow-up and implementation machinery for the Convention, the National Commission to Follow Up the Convention on the Rights of the Child was established in April 1993. The Commission established a drafting committee which prepared the initial report of the Central African Republic on measures adopted to give effect to the rights recognized in the Convention (CRC/C/11/Add.18, submitted on 15 April 1998).

D. Public debate

55. It is difficult to answer the question whether the contents of reports are the subject of public debate in the country. As stated above, the National Human Rights Commission has practically not been in operation and has not really played its assigned role of preparing reports. Even if the Commission had managed to prepare a report, it would have been difficult for the single party regime of the time to agree that it should organize a public debate, particularly as article 14 of Act No. 91.009 establishing the National Human Rights Commission prohibited the publication of cases of human rights violations.

56. At present, the National Human Rights Commission is subject to the orders of the Ministry of Justice. The new law allows it to publish verified and established cases of human rights violations. Unfortunately, the new Commission is not yet operational. Contrary to the National Human Rights Commission, it is planned that the National Commission to Follow Up the Convention on the Rights of the Child will organize a public debate on the initial report and disseminate the report widely.

57. In conclusion, it may be said that special efforts have been made only in the last few years to promote awareness among the public and the relevant authorities of the rights contained in human rights instruments. These efforts are being made by non-governmental human rights organizations, as seen above, through seminars and radio and television broadcasts.

58. It must, however, be stressed that these efforts are still inadequate because the country has material and financial problems. These constraints do not make it easy to provide information to the public on the protection of its fundamental rights, particularly to the poorest, most deprived and weakest sector of the population living in rural areas. This sector of the population is still unaware of the various human rights documents. Information for Central Africans and the publication of human rights instruments are, at present, essential, both for the relevant authorities of the country and for the population, which must make an effort to know its rights.

59. Ultimately, enormous efforts and sacrifices still have to be made to determine the most effective ways of informing, educating and training Central Africans to understand the concept of human rights, for, if we look at the impact on public opinion of awareness campaigns on the AIDS epidemic, it is obvious that Central Africans are better informed about the problem of AIDS than about problems of human rights.

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I. LAND AND PEOPLE

1. In its seven years of sovereignty, the Kyrgyz Republic has successfully shown the world that it is a unique ethnic and cultural component of human civilization pursuing its own path of development and has established its place as a democratic and peace-loving State. The attainment of independence was not simply a mechanical transfer of power; it was a very complex and ambiguous process of transition from one status to another. In this context, the fundamental shifts that occurred in people's consciousness and psychology were also complex phenomena: for the most part, the people responded enthusiastically to the social, economic and political reforms, and this is the most important point because the people are the mainspring of the historical process and progress.

2. The Kyrgyz Republic covers an area of 199,900 square kilometres. It comprises six oblasts, 41 districts, 20 cities, 29 areas incorporated as towns, and 422 rural administrations. The capital is Bishkek (600,000 inhabitants).

3. The Kyrgyz Republic is located in the north-eastern region of Central Asia. Lying between the Pamir-Altai mountains in the south-west and the Tien Shan mountains in the north-east, Kyrgyzstan shares borders with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and China.

4. As of 1 January 1998 the total population was 4.7 million; the urban population numbered 1.6 million (34 per cent of the total) and the rural population 3.1 million (66 per cent). There were 2.3 million males and 2.4 million females, respectively 49 and 51 per cent of the total population.

5. Age structure of the population. As of 1 January 1998 children and adolescents under 16 years of age numbered 1.8 million, representing 39 per cent of the total population. Persons of working age (males between 16 and 59 and females between 16 and 54 years of age) accounted for 51 per cent of the population. There were 500,000 pensioners (10 per cent). The mean length of life was 62 years for males and 71 years for females.

6. The demographic situation is characterized by falling birth and crude death rates and a decline in the migratory movement of the population out of the Republic. This is particularly evident in Bishkek and Chu oblast, where the birth rate has fallen to 14.5 and 16.2 respectively. The fall in the birth rate is attributable to the sharp deterioration in the social and economic condition of society. By depressing the level of family welfare, that deterioration is negatively affecting reproductive behaviour.

7. State policy to protect the reproductive health of the population focuses on maintaining the optimum inter-pregnancy interval and is resulting in a reduced incidence of childbirth in families in risk groups in particular.

8. There were approximately 35,000 deaths in 1997 (7.5 per 1,000), a decrease compared with 1996 (7.6 per 1,000). At the same time there has been an increase in mortality from diseases such as tuberculosis and ischemic heart disease; that is linked to the decline in living conditions.

9. Despite showing some stabilization, the high levels of mortality among women during pregnancy, labour and the lying-in period, and among babies in the first year of life (maternal and infant mortality), give particular cause for alarm. In 1997, deaths in these categories numbered over 80 for women (81 per 100,000 births) and approximately 3,000 for infants (28 per 1,000 births).

10. The principal causes of maternal mortality are renal, liver, cardiovascular and endocrine disorders and infectious diseases causing severe toxaemia accompanied by the development of multiple organ failure and postpartum haemorrhage, with subsequent fatal outcome. Respiratory disorders and perinatal complications are the main causes of infant mortality.

11. External migration in 1997 fell by a factor of 1.6 compared with the previous year to total 17,000 as against 12,000 emigrants.

12. As a result of these processes, Kyrgyzstan's population increased by 59,000 (1.3 per cent) in 1997. As of 1 January 1998, the total population was 4,666,000.

13. Ethnic composition of the population. As of 1 January 1997, Kyrgyz accounted for 60.8 per cent of the population, Russians for 15.3 per cent, Uzbeks for 14.3 per cent, and Ukrainians for 1.5 per cent. Kyrgyzstan is also home to groups of Germans, Tartars, Kazakhs, Koreans, Uigurs, Tajiks and Dungans - more than 80 nationalities in all.

14. Level of education of the population. In 1997, the number of Kyrgyz citizens with (complete or incomplete) higher and secondary education was 872 per 1,000 of population aged 15 years and over. Of this total, 101 had complete higher education; 15 had incomplete higher education; 150 had specialized secondary education, 409 had general secondary education; and 197 had incomplete secondary education.

15. The main indicator of the level and rate of the country's economic development is GDP. In 1995 there were indications that the economy had stabilized, as evidenced by slowing of the decline of GDP (GDP in 1995 was 94.6 per cent of the 1994 figure); in 1996, GDP actually grew (107.1 per cent). GDP for 1996 (in current prices) was 23,399,300 som, or 44.9 per cent higher in nominal terms than the 1995 level and 13.2 per cent higher than the GDP forecast made in the indicative plan for the social and economic development of the Kyrgyz Republic for the period 1996 to 2000. Nominal GDP for 1997 is estimated to have been 30,438,000 som, or 10.4 per cent higher in volume terms than the previous year.

16. Consumer price trends in respect of non-food goods were influenced by restrained effective demand from the population. From the beginning of the year growth in non-food prices was far lower than growth in food and service prices; it totalled 120 per cent. In 1997 the growth of prices and tariffs for remunerated services (145.8 per cent) far outstripped the growth in consumer goods prices (133.4 per cent). Over the year as a whole the prices of staple foods, the principal item in consumer expenditure, rose significantly. In 1996 the biggest price increases concerned fruit and

berries (240 per cent), eggs, milk and poultry (160 per cent), and dairy products, flour, pasta, bread and bakery products (120-140 per cent).

17. In 1997 there was a steady slow-down in the rate of increase of consumer prices. Prices rose 14.8 per cent on average, with food posting an increase of 17.4 per cent, services 15.4 per cent and non-food items 7.3 per cent. The biggest rises concerned meat and poultry (160 per cent), sugar (120 per cent) and vegetable oil (130 per cent).

18. Of the remunerated services surveyed, it was nursery school fees that showed the biggest increase (140 per cent) in 1997. Housing costs rose by 25.8 per cent, transport services by 22.4 per cent and communications by 8.3 per cent.

19. Under article 34 of the Kyrgyz Constitution, State health-care institutions offer guaranteed free medical assistance. The Government has identified and approved categories and groups of the population entitled to receive free medical assistance. Subject to the consent of the patient or his next of kin, paid services may be provided in emergencies.

20. During periods of social transformation, the population's standard of living declines. Incomes fall and for people generally, and society's most vulnerable members in particular, many social benefits become unaffordable.

21. With a view to regulating the provision of remunerated medical services, a draft law has been drawn up on the extrabudgetary activity of Kyrgyz health-care institutions. It establishes a list of the remunerated medical services which may be offered to those able to pay for them. The Government is making provision for targeted funding to organize a summertime health-building campaign for children under 14 years of age. Trade unions subsidize permits for sanatorium and restorative holidays. It must be admitted, however, that for most people a visit to a sanatorium, resort, sporting or tourism facility is still a rarity.

22. Public health is also affected by the disturbed ecological balance in the Republic, variously attributable to the change in the Aral basin, nuclear testing in neighbouring States and the hazardous condition of subsurface ponds for radioactive tailings.

23. As of 1 January 1998, 54,600 citizens were officially registered as being unemployed. Women account for 58 per cent of that total.

24. Females comprise over half (55 per cent) of the under-age unemployed and 60 per cent of young unemployed people between the ages of 16 and 29. Nearly 67 per cent of unemployed women are raising minors, and 19 per cent of them have five or more children.

II. GENERAL POLITICAL STRUCTURE

A. Brief historical survey

25. In the third century B.C., the Kyrgyz tribes were the most culturally and economically advanced ethnic group in southern Siberia. In the

fourth century, a vast association of tribes resembling the barbarian kingdoms of Western Europe was formed under the supremacy of the Kyrgyz. At the height of its power, this association covered the upper Enisei basin and all of southern Siberia, including Altai and Mongolia.

26. The Kyrgyz great power was short-lived. In the tenth century A.D. Kyrgyzstan was the core territory of the Qarakhanid State. In the thirteenth century the Mongol invasion brought about significant political and economic changes. Ethnographical characteristics changed. Intermingling and assimilation of ethnic groups occurred. The fifteenth century was characterized by renewed feudal strife in the Mongol Empire; Kyrgyz tribes began to consolidate into State-like federations. Between 1850 and 1870 Kyrgyzstan became a subject of the Russian Empire. Soviet power was established between November 1917 and June 1918. Kyrgyzstan became an autonomous oblast, an autonomous republic and a union in 1924, 1926 and 1936 respectively. The principal events between 1936 and 1991 were victory in the Second World War, the "thaw" under Khrushchev, "stagnation" under Brezhnev, the vacillations of perestroika under Gorbachev and the collapse of the totalitarian system.

27. Kyrgyzstan declared its independence on 31 August 1991. In the Declaration on the State independence of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan solemnly proclaimed the country to be an independent sovereign State.

B. State structure, political system, form of government

28. Under the Constitution, the Kyrgyz Republic is a sovereign, unitary, democratic republic founded on the rule of law and a secular State. The sovereignty of the Kyrgyz Republic is not limited and extends to all of its territory. The Kyrgyz people is the repository of sovereignty and the sole source of State power in the Kyrgyz Republic.

29. Only the elected Zhogorku Kenesh (Parliament) and the President of the Kyrgyz Republic are entitled to speak for the people of Kyrgyzstan. Amendments to and revisions of the Constitution, laws and other important issues in the life of the State may be put to a referendum.

30. In its form of government, Kyrgyzstan combines elements of a presidential and a parliamentary republic (a presidential-parliamentary republic).

The President of the Kyrgyz Republic

31. The President of the Kyrgyz Republic is the head of State, the highest official in the country, a symbol of national unity and State power, and the guarantor of the Constitution and human and civil rights and freedoms. The head of State determines the main lines of the State's domestic and foreign policy, represents the Kyrgyz Republic inside the country and in the context of international relations, takes measures to protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Kyrgyz Republic, and safeguards the unity and continuity of State power, the coordination and interaction of State organs and their accountability to the people.

32. The President of the Kyrgyz Republic is elected for a term of five years. The same individual cannot be elected President for more than two consecutive terms. The presidency must be held by a Kyrgyz citizen not less than 35 and not more than 65 years of age who speaks the national language and has been resident in the country for at least 15 years prior to his nomination for the presidency.

The legislature

33. The Amendment and Supplementing of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic Act of 17 February 1996, which was adopted by referendum on 10 February 1996, stipulates that the legislative branch of the Kyrgyz Republic shall be the Zhogorku Kenesh (Parliament), a bicameral representative body comprising: the Legislative Assembly, a standing body of 35 elected deputies representing the interests of the population as a whole, and the sessional Assembly of People's Representatives, which numbers 70 elected deputies representing territorial interests. The deputies of the Legislative Assembly and the Assembly of People's Representatives are elected for a term of five years.

34. The Legislative Assembly of the Zhogorku Kenesh is responsible for: amending and supplementing the Constitution in line with prescribed constitutional procedure; enacting laws; officially interpreting the Constitution and the laws which it has itself enacted; modifying the borders of the Kyrgyz Republic, and approving laws enacted by the Assembly of People's Representatives.

35. The Assembly of People's Representatives of the Zhogorku Kenesh is responsible for: amending and supplementing the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic; enacting laws in certain cases provided for by the Constitution; approving laws enacted by the Legislative Assembly in cases specified by the Constitution; officially interpreting the Constitution and laws which it has itself enacted; passing the budget and certifying the national accounts, and modifying the jurisdiction of city and military courts of the Kyrgyz Republic.

The executive

36. Article 69 of the Constitution stipulates that executive power in the Kyrgyz Republic shall be exercised by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, its subordinate ministries, State committees, administrative departments, and the local State administration.

37. The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic is the country's highest executive organ. The Government is headed by the Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic and consists of the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Ministers, ministers and the chairmen of the State Committees of the Kyrgyz Republic.

38. The Prime Minister is appointed by the President with the consent of the Assembly of People's Representatives. The Prime Minister outlines the general direction of government policy in accordance with the Constitution, the laws and presidential decrees. He also organizes the Government's work and is personally responsible for its performance.

The judiciary

39. Article 79 of the Constitution stipulates that justice in the Kyrgyz Republic shall be administered solely by the courts.

40. The following courts exist in the Kyrgyz Republic: the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court, the High Court of Arbitration and the local courts (oblast courts, Bishkek city court, district courts, city courts, oblast arbitration courts, Bishkek arbitration court, and military courts).

41. The Constitutional Court of the Kyrgyz Republic is the highest judicial organ for the protection of the Constitution. It declares laws and other regulatory acts to be unconstitutional in cases where they depart from the Constitution, and it settles disputes concerning the operation, application and interpretation of the Constitution. Decisions of the Constitutional Court are final and unappealable.

42. The Supreme Court of the Kyrgyz Republic is the highest judicial organ in respect of civil, criminal and administrative proceedings. The Supreme Court supervises the judicial activity of the oblast, Bishkek city and district courts.

43. The High Court of Arbitration of the Kyrgyz Republic and the oblast and Bishkek arbitration courts form the unified system of arbitration courts of the Kyrgyz Republic. Arbitration courts settle disputes arising in the economic sphere and in business between entities under various forms of ownership. The High Court of Arbitration of the Kyrgyz Republic supervises the judicial activity of the oblast and Bishkek arbitration courts.

44. Decisions handed down by the Kyrgyz courts which have acquired legal force are binding on all State organs, businesses, public associations, officials and citizens and are subject to execution throughout the territory of Kyrgyzstan. Failure to execute judicial decisions which have acquired legal force, and also interference in the work of the courts, incurs liability as specified by the law.

III. GENERAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Law enforcement organs.

45. The work of the law enforcement organs is based on unconditional compliance with the laws of the Kyrgyz Republic and international treaties in respect of citizens' rights, freedoms and lawful interests. Law enforcement in the Kyrgyz Republic is the preserve of special organs including the Procurator's Office, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and its subsidiary organs, the Ministry of National Security, the Ministry of Justice and lawyers.

46. The Office of the Procurator of the Kyrgyz Republic is a State body within the executive branch with responsibility for verifying that legislative instruments are strictly and uniformly observed by local self-government organs, ministries, State committees, administrative departments and other

government organs, local State administration, public associations, officials, businesses regardless of their form of ownership, and citizens.

47. The Ministry of Internal Affairs is an armed State law enforcement organ which performs executive and administrative functions connected with the maintenance of public order, the protection of personal and public safety and the fight against crime.

48. The Ministry of Justice is the primary administrative organ for implementing State legal policy as regards protection of the rights and lawful interests of citizens and of legal persons whatever their form of ownership.

49. The Ministry of National Security and other national security organs belong to the executive branch and are intended for preventing harm to the security of the Kyrgyz Republic; within the limits of the powers entrusted to them, they also ensure personal, public and State security, and expose, prevent and suppress espionage and subversion by foreign intelligence services and organizations.

50. Lawyers help to protect the rights and lawful interests of citizens and organizations. They also facilitate the administration of justice and the observance and strengthening of the law. They mainly: advise on and elucidate legal problems; represent clients before the courts and other State organs in civil and administrative cases, and frame applications, appeals and other documents of a legal nature.

51. No person may be arrested or detained otherwise than prescribed by law. All acts tending to attribute guilt for an offence before there has been a verdict by a court are inadmissible and constitute grounds for the award of material or moral damages to the aggrieved party through the intermediary of a court.

52. The rules enshrined in the Constitution are in accord with the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international covenants and instruments pertaining to human rights. Under national law, all Kyrgyz citizens are equally entitled to the protection of their rights and freedoms regardless of their national or social origin, sex, language, political or other opinions, religion, place of residence, property or other status. Judicial protection of rights and freedoms is guaranteed, and citizens are, therefore, entitled to seek redress through the courts if they believe that their rights have been violated.

Special organs for the protection of human rights

53. In order to establish effective machinery for protecting human rights and assisting the President in exercising his constitutional powers as guarantor of human and civil rights and freedoms, a presidential decree was issued on 5 July 1997 establishing a Human Rights Commission reporting to the President of the Kyrgyz Republic.

54. The State Commission for the Family and Women, which reports to the Kyrgyz Government, was established in 1996. The Commission deals with the

implementation of priority measures to resolve the most important issues facing women and addresses topics relevant to their rights and freedoms.

55. A Commission for Minors has been established within the Kyrgyz Government. Similar structures have been formed in the regions.

56. Organs to deal with the problems facing families, women and children operate at all levels in the Kyrgyz Republic. A Human Rights Committee and a Commission on Education, Women, the Family and Youth operate in the Legislative Assembly of the Zhogorku Kenesh.

57. A large number of non-governmental organizations involved in the protection of human rights are currently operating in Kyrgyzstan. Many of them provide the public with information about the rights and freedoms guaranteed under the Constitution and international human rights instruments.

58. For the purposes of drafting for submission to the relevant United Nations organs the country's initial reports on the legislative, administrative and other measures taken by the Kyrgyz Government in pursuance of human rights conventions, the Kyrgyz Government issued an Ordinance on 27 June 1997 establishing an interdepartmental commission entrusted with the preparation of national reports on Kyrgyzstan's implementation of human rights conventions.

Constitutional protection of civil and political rights

59. Kyrgyzstan's Basic Law is the Constitution adopted by the Zhogorku Kenesh in 1993, as amended and revised on 17 February 1996. It contains a special section outlining the rights and freedoms of the individual and the duties of the citizen.

60. Article 16 of the Constitution recognizes and guarantees fundamental human rights and freedoms in accordance with universally accepted principles and standards of international law and the inter-State treaties and agreements concerning human rights which have been ratified by the Kyrgyz Republic. Everyone in the Kyrgyz Republic has the right to life, physical and moral immunity, personal freedom and security, freedom of personal development, freedom of religion, spiritual life and worship, free expression and dissemination of their thoughts, ideas and opinions, freedom of literary, artistic, scientific and technical creativity, freedom of the press, freedom to transmit and disseminate information, freedom of movement, freedom to choose a place of abode or residence anywhere in Kyrgyzstan, freedom to travel abroad and to return without hindrance, freedom of association and peaceable unarmed assembly, freedom to hold rallies and demonstrations, inviolability of the home, freedom and privacy of correspondence, dignity, freedom of private life, personal and family privacy, private postal, telegraph and telephone communications, the right to own property and to possess, use and administer it at their discretion, economic freedom, free use of their abilities and property for any type of economic activity, freedom of labour and the right freely to choose their occupation or profession.

61. The enumeration of rights and freedoms in the Constitution should not be interpreted as negating or diminishing other universally recognized human rights and freedoms.

62. On 12 January 1994 the Zhogorku Kenesh adopted a Decision on accession to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, necessitating the adoption of a number of measures to establish a legal mechanism for implementing the provisions of the Covenant. These measures include the enactment of new laws, the amendments of existing laws, and the drafting of regulatory and normative instruments to govern the activities of State organs in respect of civil and political human rights.

63. The Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic stipulates that inter-State treaties and other rules of international law which have been ratified by the Kyrgyz Republic form an integral and directly applicable part of Kyrgyz law. The Kyrgyz Republic recognizes the principles and standards of international law and has signed international treaties and agreements concerning human rights; these principles and standards are reflected in domestic law. All the necessary steps are being taken to ensure that the law not only proclaims human rights but also protects them.

64. One of the challenges of establishing the rule of law in Kyrgyzstan is to adopt legal rules and measures for their application that take account of universally recognized human rights standards. International human rights instruments are taken into account in the elaboration of new law in Kyrgyzstan. Representatives from international and non-governmental organizations are enlisted as experts when drawing up new Kyrgyz legislation.

65. The legal reform under way in Kyrgyzstan provides for the incorporation of inalienable human rights and the security and legal protection of the individual in the law of the land. The following new laws have been enacted on the basis of international human rights standards: The Civil Code (Parts 1 and 2); the Criminal Code; the Labour Code; the Consumer Protection Act.

66. Although the requirements of the Covenants have been met in terms of both tenor and content by the improvement in the overall statutory framework and the adoption between 1994 and 1997 of a number of laws and other normative instruments, the system for ensuring the legal protection of citizens is still inadequate. The main reason is that the Kyrgyz Republic still lacks a uniform State policy for the integrated solution of all problems connected with human rights.

Human rights protection on the basis of international standards

67. Since acquiring its sovereignty, the Kyrgyz Republic has acceded to 22 international human rights treaties within the framework of the United Nations and its specialized agencies:

1. The Convention on the Rights of the Child;

2. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

3. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;

4. The Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

5. The International Labour Organization Convention concerning Migration for Employment;

6. The International Labour Organization Convention concerning Equality of Treatment of Nationals and Non-Nationals in Social Security;

7. The International Labour Organization Convention concerning the Establishment of an International System for the Maintenance of Rights in Social Security;

8. The Convention against Discrimination in Education;

9. The Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees;

10. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (came into force on 3 September 1981);

11. The Convention on the Political Rights of Women (came into force on 7 July 1954);

12. The Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage Registration of Marriages (came into force on 9 December 1964);

13. The Convention on the Nationality of Married Women (came into force on 11 August 1958);

14. ILO Convention No. 103 concerning Maternity Protection (Revised) (came into force on 7 September 1955);

15. The International Convention against Apartheid in Sport (came into force on 10 December 1985);

16. The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (came into force on 26 June 1987);

17. The Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others;

18. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (came into force on 4 January 1969);

19. The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (came into force on 12 January 1961);

20. The Slavery Convention and the Protocol amending the Slavery Convention signed at Geneva on 25 September 1926 (came into force on 7 December 1953);

21. The Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (came into force on 30 April 1957);

22. The International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid.

68. In addition, Kyrgyzstan is a party to human rights treaties within the Commonwealth of Independent States.

IV. INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY

69. Article 41 of the Constitution states that the publication of laws and other normative instruments concerning human and citizens' rights, freedoms and duties shall constitute a mandatory condition of their application.

70. The Kyrgyz Government is endeavouring to raise public awareness of various matters pertaining to the human rights and freedoms guaranteed to citizens under the Constitution and the various international treaties, including the Covenant to which Kyrgyzstan is a party.

71. Most of the work of disseminating information to the public regarding the principles and provisions of international human rights treaties is carried out by the Kyrgyz Government, the Commission for the Family and Women, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, the Ministry of Health, the State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company and other ministries and administrative departments directly concerned, and by non-governmental organizations.

72. The International Committee of the Red Cross is funding the publication of a textbook entitled Chelovek i obshchestvo (The Individual and Society) for a mass readership. In addition to providing essential educational material, it outlines the main concepts of international humanitarian law.

73. The texts of the international treaties ratified by the Kyrgyz Republic have been printed in the Gazette of the Zhogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic. The texts of all the ratified conventions have been translated into the official State language and the national languages of the Republic (in particular, Russian and Uzbek).

74. A series of digests on human rights issues have been published in Kyrgyzstan, and the compilations of international human rights instruments published by the United Nations have been widely circulated.

75. Kyrgyz non-governmental organizations regularly publish newsletters about the human rights situation in the country, for example Sredstva massovoi informatsii: zakonodatelstvo i praktika (The Mass Media: Law and Practice).

76. Human rights are taught as a topic in many universities and schools as part of the general education curriculum.

77. To enhance judges' skills, the Kyrgyz judiciary is in the process of setting up an authority to teach local-court judges how to use modern office equipment, familiarize them with changes in the law, and so forth. It is also intended to familiarize them with the United Nations treaties which have been ratified by Kyrgyzstan, specifically the human rights instruments.

78. To foster the application of ratified international human rights treaties, regular seminars are held in Kyrgyzstan for representatives of State organs, judicial bodies and members of the public. The following seminars are worthy of note:

(a) "International human rights standards and their domestic implementation", a seminar organized in Bishkek from 25 to 28 November 1996 by the International Commission of Jurists and the Constitutional Court of the Kyrgyz Republic with the participation of representatives of the judiciary, lawyers, government bodies and non-governmental organizations;

(b) "Human rights: national institutions and mechanisms", a round table conference held in Bishkek on 9 April 1997 organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic with the participation of representatives of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) the Polish Ombudsman, Kyrgyz government bodies and non-governmental organizations;

(c) "Journalism and the law", an international seminar held from 22 to 24 April 1997 by the Soros-Kyrgyzstan Foundation and the Kyrgyz-American Bureau on Human Rights and Rule of Law, with special emphasis on protecting the rights of journalists and freedom of the mass media;

(d) "The constitutional dimension of legal reform and the legal system", a seminar held in Bishkek on 17 and 18 June organized by the Council of Europe in conjunction with the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the Kyrgyz Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Justice;

(e) A workshop held in Bishkek from 13 to 15 October 1997 on the submission of State reports and individual complaints to human rights treaty bodies organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in conjunction with the International Commission of Jurists and attended by representatives of government bodies involved in preparing reports and of non-governmental organizations.